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ABSTRACT

This book acquaints the school administrator with the need for good press relations and suggests ways to obtain such relations. A brief overview of the internal workings and concerns of a newspaper staff is presented. Methods of writing news copy for release and how to time releases for maximum news coverage are explained. Throughout the volume, examples show how to "tell it with pictures." Suggestions are given on how to reverse an unfavorable press and how to handle false rumors or half-true stories. Sample news releases are appended with a list of publications of the National School Public Relations Association. (DE)

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The Schools and the Press

EA 002 663

National School Public Relations Association • Washington, D.C.

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ROY K. WILSON, *Secretary-Treasurer*
National School Public Relations Association

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago the education editor of *The New York Times* went to a luncheon meeting of an educational organization to cover a prominent speaker. When he asked for the press table, he was informed that there was no press table, that he was not invited for lunch, and that if he came back later, they would sneak him in a side door to sit on a straight chair and listen.

Recently, one of the largest universities in the country, which makes its home in New York City, offered these comforts to reporters covering its commencement on a broiling hot June day—an air-conditioned, glassed-in room raised off the ground for a clear view, a public-address system which piped in the proceedings, a pair of binoculars for every reporter, coffee, pastries, hard liquor (if desired), comfortable chairs, typewriters, and enough telephones to go around.

Between this perigee and apogee, the education reporter has been launched into an orbit of prestige and influence to which he is totally unaccustomed. From a rank somewhere below the religion writer and the real estate editor and perhaps slightly above copy boy, he has been catapulted to the status of hero in what one leading news magazine has dramatized as "the biggest boom in U.S. newspapers"—education reporting. Be he called education reporter, writer, or editor, he is eating up increasing amounts of space, and he is appearing with gratifying regularity on page one.

Education reporting began to assume this importance when newspapers, spurred by the competition from news magazines, began also to talk of "reporting in depth," of giving past background, present action, and future implication. To achieve this, an expert of sorts who knew the implications of a story was required, as well as giving the expert time to prepare his work. Newspapers could no longer get by with running pictures of blond co-eds in tight sweaters and football helmets each fall and labeling it education.

We are now moving with dramatic speed into a period where education news is getting its fair deal. How big and long-lasting the boom is, and how much quality will go along with the quantity, depend on each reporter and on those whom the education reporters can persuade to help them in telling, with increasing honesty and integrity, the education story.

Terry Ferrer
Education Editor
New York Herald Tribune

1

WHY YOU NEED GOOD PRESS RELATIONS

Press relations of the school administrator, like the kinfolk kind of relations, are always there.

Whether as a cub reporter, an education writer, the editor of a local weekly, the publisher of a metropolitan daily, or a news writer for a TV station, the press is watching your school system. The schools—as you know—touch the heart, head, and pocketbook of all citizens. And as the community's "alter ego," the press feels that it is responsible for knowing all and telling all that is interesting, informative, or entertaining about the schools.

Another factor has entered the picture of press relations for schools. Newspaper editors and broadcasting media are placing more importance on the coverage of education. The public recognizes more and more that formal education is the strength of our society, so it considers education a logical topic for debate, opinion, and action. Readers want to know how the school finance situation, as seen from the local, state, and federal levels, affects their schools; they want to know if the teaching machines described in national magazine articles are being used locally, and how and where; they want to know what happens to Centerville's high school graduates—in colleges or in jobs. Readers (and editors) want to fit

Centerville's piece of the education jigsaw into the total picture.

As the school superintendent, principal, public relations director, or building news representative, you are a key person upon whom the press depends. So your question is not "Why have press relations?" but "How do I have good press relations?"

The purpose of this handbook is to answer the latter question. Press relations is a broad term, and this handbook discusses it in a limited way. Your press audience may include newspaper reporters, reporters for television and radio stations, and TV cameramen. The focus here is on relations with newspaper personnel, a large and varied group as the following chapters will show. Most of the principles and many of the details of working with newspaper reporters and editors are the same for other media.

Before we start to talk about good press relations, there are a few wrong impressions some school people have about the press which need clearing up.

•

Wrong Idea—"The press is only interested in scoops and scandals." Of course, the individual reporter is always looking for a big story, and the editor is always looking for one with which to "top the page," but any newspaper or broadcasting medium that considers itself a vital part of the community will have a continuing interest in schools. Covering the achievements and the highlights of everyday activities of schools can become a habit with the press, if it is encouraged to do so and given free access to the "little big stories."

Right Idea—"The press is interested in anything newsworthy about the schools."

•

Wrong Idea—"The press should be with us and not against us." This is a variation of the above wrong idea. An entirely antagonistic press (another problem which is discussed in detail later) is rare; a detached press, which monitors the community it serves, is the common pattern. Because editors are committed to education as an institution, they reserve the right to examine critically the activities and results of the local school system. You may think your schools are the best in the country, but the editors represent an outside viewpoint seen without benefit of rosy tinted glasses! And this viewpoint can aid you in sharpening your own concepts and actions.

Right Idea—"The press is entitled to its opinions, based upon fair and accurate interpretations."

●

Wrong Idea—"No one should talk to the press except me." This exclusive declaration is likely to make the typewriter ribbon burn hot—against you. Censorship is the most offensive word in the press vocabulary, and to invoke it is to ask for bad press relations. The principle of free access to information takes precedence over any circumstances, in the viewpoint of the press. You want your office to become known as the place where answers are quickly and easily found, and the way to attract this confidence is to show confidence in the press and in your school system. Open all doors (make your door the most accessible), give other staff members experience in working with the press, and encourage an attitude of helping rather than hindering all those who have contacts with the press. You will discover that the press usually decides there is no need of trying doors where it isn't sure of a story.

Right Idea—"The full staff and facilities of the school system are available to the press."

Wrong Idea—"Let the press come to me." This approach is one of apathy rather than censorship. Many educators, burdened with too much to do in too little time, resent being bothered with the problems of press relations. Yet, for a school administrator or public relations director, developing good press relations is a vital part of the job—and will eventually prove to be a time-saver. Community awareness of the school system's problems and achievements depends greatly on your press relations. If you make no effort to establish regular communications with the press outlets, assuming an attitude of "move the mountain to me," then your press relations will suffer. Accept the fact that a newsman may need to call at any hour of the day or night.

Right Idea—"One of my important functions is to develop strong communication channels with the press."

●

To develop the kind of communication with the press that fosters mutual understanding and appreciation, school people first must know whom and what they face when they meet the press. One of the oldest rules in journalism says that a good news story must have the five "W's"—Who, What, When, Where, and

Why (and often an "H"—How). As the following chapters will show, the story of good public relations has the same ingredients.

LITTLE BOYS ARE made of lots of things, as teachers learn on the first day of school. Little ideas can become a story worth telling in pictures, as the photographs throughout the book show.

2

WHO PUTS OUT THE NEWSPAPER?

The Editor

Editors and school administrators have much in common. Both are very busy with details and with decision-making. Both have many audiences to please. Both have outside and inside responsibilities—to understand, interpret, and influence community life and to direct a staff that will carry out its responsibilities.

The duties—and accessibility—of an editor vary with the situation. In a large metropolitan daily, the editor most probably is concerned with policy-making and directing the editorial influence of the newspaper. If he heads a small daily, he may take an active part in writing news stories and editorials, and his schedule may be rigidly determined by the deadline schedule of his paper. On the other hand, the editor of a weekly newspaper may also be chief reporter, leg man, advertising copy writer, and typesetter.

Whatever his role, however, every editor must do certain things—direct the over-all policy of the newspaper with respect to editorial and reporting coverage; keep in contact with community affairs and with key leaders in community life; and work with other departments of the newspaper—advertising, promotion, and the publisher's office—always with the understanding that newspapers are in business to make a profit as well as to perform a public service.

The City Room

There are several channels and points of contact in the operation of a daily newspaper. Each paper will have various titles and functions, and the news release that you take into the city room could be handled by:

Managing editor—Larger newspapers use a managing editor for the day-to-day operations of the paper, leaving the editor free for policy-making and community contacts.

City editor—The key person in the city room, the city editor decides how to handle stories and/or press releases, makes assignments, counsels reporters about their stories, and reads the copy before it goes to the "desk."

News editor—Sometimes called the slot man because he sits inside an oblong desk or horseshoe desk, he distributes copy to the copyreaders who further edit the stories, make up the pages of the newspaper, write headlines, and sometimes read the proof pages. The news editor usually decides on the placement of stories in the newspaper.

State editor—If your story has more than just local interest or ties in with state or national current news, it may be handed over to the state editor. He might combine it with other related news, and possibly designate it to be sent out over the press wire.

Editorial editor—A school story which needs interpretation or invokes opinion will be proper comment for the editorial page of a newspaper. On smaller papers, the page is handled by one person with fill-ins from syndicated columns and letters to the editor. Large papers also use these other sources, but their editorial comment is a product of a staff of specially trained writers who are interested in facts and more facts and people who can provide them with facts. These will be sifted and selected to appear on the editorial page as opinions of the newspaper.

Photography department—On smaller newspapers reporters frequently also serve as their own cameramen, while the staff photographers, if any, are used only for special assignments. Larger newspapers have enough photographers to handle all of the paper's photo coverage, and reporters and photographers work together on assignments.

The Reporter

The stereotype of a slouched, slangy newspaper reporter is as old and faded as the bun-haired, bustled, long-shirted school marm. The reporter assigned to cover education may be a specialist with years of experience in the education field. Such reporters are becoming more numerous—newspapers increasingly are using staff with special backgrounds not only in education but in city government, crime reporting, health and welfare, and many other areas as well. And education news has become so important that editors want a full-time expert reporting it for them.

Even most newspapers without a designated education editor or writer will keep one reporter on the "school beat" as much as possible. Where the reporting is erratic, you may have some persuading to do. If the paper's staff is large enough to provide a regular school reporter, make a personal appeal to the editor—with some tips on the news and human interest features that could be uncovered with regular reporting.

In addition to the education writer, learn whom to contact in the women's or society department. For example, this department may be interested in features of retiring teachers — particularly women

A LANGUAGE LESSON? A news story to write? An assignment for advanced students? A new teacher? A new classroom? The photograph feature is where you look for it.

teachers—specials on PTA events, a student and faculty fine arts presentation, or other events.

There are other contacts on the newspaper that you should cultivate. If there is a science specialist, he may be the best one to contact at Science Fair time. If there is a reviewer, he may be interested in outstanding school plays or operettas.

By making use of the specialist, you get both a reporter with an interest in the particular topic and the select audience that reads him.

First, however, offer all story suggestions to the education writer. He may not want the story, but you have done the proper thing by making him the offer. The education writer may be able to assist you in making contact with these other newspaper sources.

When there aren't enough reporters to go around, become one yourself. If you are a school administrator, learn (or have someone on your staff learn) to write news releases, to provide all the pertinent information on stories over the telephone, and to spot good news stories, human interest features, and catchy photographs. If you are a teacher assigned the school public relations responsibilities, train yourself to do the same, and let the newspapers know that you are available.

The proper care and feeding of news to reporters require a few simple rules:

- Help the reporter meet his deadlines. Know when they are. The reporter is rushed because news is not only perishable (there is nothing as old as yesterday's front page), but also must be written to meet specific deadlines. Help him by being immediately available when he calls; give him advance notice of special events or projects; and provide him with written background on stories that might otherwise require hours of research on his part.
- Understand the job of the reporter—that it is his duty to find and write the news (with no comments from you, thanks, as to what to put in the lead). Others on the newspaper's staff decide how much of the story to run or whether to use it at all, where to place it in the newspaper, and what headline to put on it. Remember, the reporter almost never writes the headline on his story.
- If you have a good story, a follow-up, or a complaint, go directly to the education reporter. You also may wish to talk to the editor, but first let your regular reporter in on your thoughts.

- Avoid giving out information that is difficult to interpret or understand. This may result in a story not being used. Newspapers generally are written in an easy-to-read style (notice short sentences and paragraphs, the choice of simple words). Even if a reporter is writing about the latest application of programed learning to calculus, he must do it in terms that readers at many education levels can understand.

If there were one Golden Rule in dealing with reporters, it would be to find the specific information that the reporter wants or to direct him to it quickly and efficiently.

You can't be a buck-passer or a door-closer and expect to have good press relations.

You should be the best fact-finder in the community.

3

HOW DO NEWSPAPERS WORK?

What do slug, dingbat, lockup, and bulldog mean in a city room?

If such terms confuse you, be assured that a journalist does not have an easy time with such educational terms as core curriculum, exceptional children, and the psychology of learning. It is his job—whether editor or reporter—to find out what these terms and the specialized language of the teaching profession mean, and to interpret them to the public. As the press contact for your school system, you are equally responsible for understanding the world of the reporter. What is it like?

The Weekly

Nothing in American journalism is as close to home as the weekly newspaper, a folksy catchall for births, deaths, weddings, livestock shows, school awards, club meetings, and grass-roots humor. The writing frequently climaxes with "a good time was had by all." Yet there is another image of the weekly—that of many small but vigorous newspapers doing award-winning coverage and writing of community affairs.

There are some 8,000 of these community newspapers in the country today, and their circulation has been rising at the rate of about one million readers a year since 1955. Often their greatest asset is enthusiasm; their only employee is owner, editor, reporter, typesetter, and ad salesman. If a weekly paper has more than a one-man staff, everyone will still be busy—looking for news and pictures to fill space that, for lack of time on the part of the staff, might be turned over to public notices.

In both news and advertising, the weekly newspaper is almost exclusively local. Its occasional excursions beyond community news—into politics, health reports, agricultural forums—still have a local application.

School news should be presented to the paper in as complete form as possible. It should be given far enough in advance to fit the once-a-week schedule. Weekly editors appreciate photographs accompanying stories. Some of them will use mats, pressed paper imprints of metal engravings (of visiting speakers, education week materials, etc.). Weekly editors like to talk and listen personally to their news sources, but on Wednesdays and Thursdays, ordinarily the deadline and press days for weeklies, your casual conversation is more likely to irritate than to ingratiate.

Suburban Newspapers

A relatively new phenomenon upon the journalism scene is the suburban newspaper, a half-and-half combination of the weekly and the metropolitan newspaper. These publications fit no definite classification—some are published weekly, some semiweekly, others are really small dailies. In metropolitan areas, where the large dailies are primarily concerned with state, national, and international news, the suburban newspaper is becoming an important place for local news, covered only briefly by the metropolitan daily (in the Washington, D. C., area, for example, there are 32 suburban newspapers). Their interests are akin to those of the weekly—town council meetings, zoning changes, social news, schools—but their staffs are likely to be larger and more experienced.

While a metropolitan daily will be most interested in education news that is broad—curriculum, school board policies, controversy that has important consequences, good picture features—the weekly and suburban papers are interested in the day-by-day news—meetings, one-picture features, new assignments, school bond and board election campaign details.

The Neighborhood Newspaper

Some urban areas have weekly or even daily neighborhood newspapers, which are not necessarily published in the suburbs. They may cover a well-defined area of a central city, and some may be special editions of the metropolitan newspapers (this will occur only in a very large city). Also, some of these urban papers are ethnic-oriented. The Detroit area, for example has about 60 newspapers—daily and weekly—that are directed at ethnic groups and other special groups. The staff and the news coverage of these neighborhood newspapers are very similar to those of the suburban papers.

Metropolitan and Small City Dailies

Newspaper editors in large cities receive more news than they can possibly ever use, so part of understanding the large city mass media is understanding news selection and interests. Approximately 40 percent of a newspaper is turned over to news, 60 percent to advertising. The selection of top stories is more often the decision of the editor (sometimes even the publisher, who is the owner), or the managing editor. The city editor primarily handles local news. Departmental stories—sports, society, farm—each have their own editor and staff.

A reporter receives his assignment from the city editor or he finds it on his "beat." After he writes it, the story is reviewed by the city editor, then goes to the desk for editing (checked for style and accuracy and given a headline), then to the composing room to be set in type, or to tape punchers which provide an automated way of setting type. The copy is checked again on a proof by proofreaders and the editors.

Reporters and editors of morning newspapers usually are not available until noon, the beginning of their working day. Stories that you want to bring to reporters' attention on the same day should be related to them before they leave on assignments.

Editors of afternoon papers usually are too busy to carry on casual conversations in the morning. Reporters usually are on their beats early, and do feature work or long-term stories for future issues in the afternoon.

Because the size of a newspaper fluctuates from day to day—depending upon advertising which often is a seasonal factor—school public relations personnel should learn the appropriate timing for stories. Good features with picture possibilities are welcomed for the large Sunday editions, but these stories must be planned well in advance. Some sections of Sunday newspapers are printed a day or more ahead of time; their deadlines may be as early as the preceding Tuesday or Wednesday. Mondays are light news days, particularly for morning newspapers, but releases should be given the week before with the Monday release date indicated. Saturday afternoon and Sunday staffs of newspapers ordinarily are "skeleton" crews and are not prepared to handle big stories.

Specialists, such as education writers, would prefer to be contacted for stories during their regular working hours and working week. But if a big story breaks on their off hours, try to alert them.

What To Expect from Any Newspaper

Newspapers are a product of human beings, not mechanical handouts. You can expect some rewriting of stories which you submit, some rejections; some errors —reporters, typesetters, copyreaders, and headline writers are not infallible; some omissions, misleading headlines; and the placement of school news on page 14 more often than on page 1.

But if you appreciate the conditions in which newspapermen work and try to understand their deadline requirements, their special interests, and their prides and prejudices, you will have the basis for a good working relationship with the press.

TEEN-AGE TYPESETTERS, an important part of a high school's vocational training program. Many will be working in composing rooms after graduation; photograph shows them earnestly learning now.

(Slug is the name given each story, dingbats are type decorations, lockup is the composing room deadline, and bulldog is an early newspaper edition. You pass.)

4

WHAT IS NEWS?

How is your nose for news? Does it sniff out the next band concert, the superintendent's trip to Atlantic City meetings, or the May Day program? Does it stop when the going gets tough, when the real news—how children learn in the classroom, the way to quality education in your community—requires imagination, initiative, opinion, and lots of go-gettum?

Citizens are less concerned about the speakers for the PTA meeting than they are about the reasons for new grading systems, new curriculum ideas, updating of school building facilities, qualifications of the teachers who work with their children each day.

The increased sophistication of public interest in education, helped by more experienced reporting of education news in the communications media, makes the job of the school public relations contact more challenging. Reporters don't want handouts on class plays. *They want "hard" education news.*

No matter what the source, what the occasion, what the reason, your handling of education news requires a few ground rules:

- If you are working directly with reporters on stories that they initiate or will write from the beginning, your responsibility is to be accurate, honest, and helpful.

- If you are submitting your own news releases, they should correspond in style to the publication and contain all necessary information (see Chapter 6).
- News that you alert media to, whether by personal contact or in news releases, should be suited to the media. For example, a big city press cannot handle new teaching assignments for the many school districts which may be in its circulation area, but the suburban press serving your school area may publish the story.
- Do not ask that a story be used, but let it stand on its news value. Do not demand that a story be printed as it is written. Do not complain if a story is rewritten or shortened, unless the meaning is changed. Don't give an editor a chance to say, "Who do you think is running this newspaper?"
- Encourage editors to enter competitions for newspaper interpretation of schools, as the national Education Writers Awards and state and local School Bell Awards.

- One good way to make friends with reporters—give them tips, where possible, for news stories on subjects other than schools.

Spot News

Spot news either can be planned (and the accomplishment will be most satisfying) or it can be unplanned (take you by surprise, require you to be public relations alert).

Almost every time spot news will be straight news, a factual story in which the elements of who, what, where, when, why, and sometimes how are the elements the reporter needs. The emphasis will be upon the event; the embellishments of "color" or quoted opinion will be less important.

Planned spot news usually is an event or activity scheduled beforehand. You will have time to prepare a news release or to inform the education reporter in time for him to prepare the story. Examples of planned spot news are scheduling of school board meetings, announcements of scholarship winners, opening of a new school, a visiting speaker, or recognition day for teachers.

Unplanned spot news frequently is unpleasant—a playground accident, a critical speech made about the schools upon which you are asked to comment. If it is bad news that comes from within the system, try to be the first to tell the editor or the reporter, assuring him that all the details are or will be made available as soon as possible.

Not all unexpected news is bad—perhaps you are asked to comment about a *complimentary* speech, or the sudden announcement of school board approval of increased salaries or expanded curriculum. In any instance, it is necessary to remember that spot news is highly perishable, of interest to the public perhaps only one day. As the news source or the commentator on the news, your obligation to news media is to be fully informed, accurate, and fast. A follow-up release or a hesitant statement, submitted the next day, is no longer spot news. It is history.

Feature News

Features are based on human interest; they stir the emotions of readers. Some of them also are perishable, covering only one event on one day (a primary grade visits a space exhibit; touring international students or teachers visit your schools). However, the everyday supply of feature stories in classrooms is bound only by your imagination and the news reporter's energy. Usually reporters

THE SPONTANEOUS, the natural, truly the drama that goes on each day between teachers and pupils can be portrayed for all to see by a photographer who is sensitive to the action and emotions of his subjects. A teacher acts out a story (right) to a fascinated, and open-mouthed, class; the enjoyment of a new, sweeping-lined school shows on the faces of a class (below right) on its way to the playground; problems and a sympathetic ear (left) are framed by a classroom door, an opening-day scene that words couldn't tell.

will prefer to write their own feature stories so that their style and flair for writing will show through. However, busy papers often will take a feature story written by personnel of the school system. If this is your assignment, remember that facts and personalities are important; that the humor, the human interest, the unusual twist to possibly an old idea are the things that will influence an editor's decision about what to use in his paper.

Where do you find features? Everywhere.

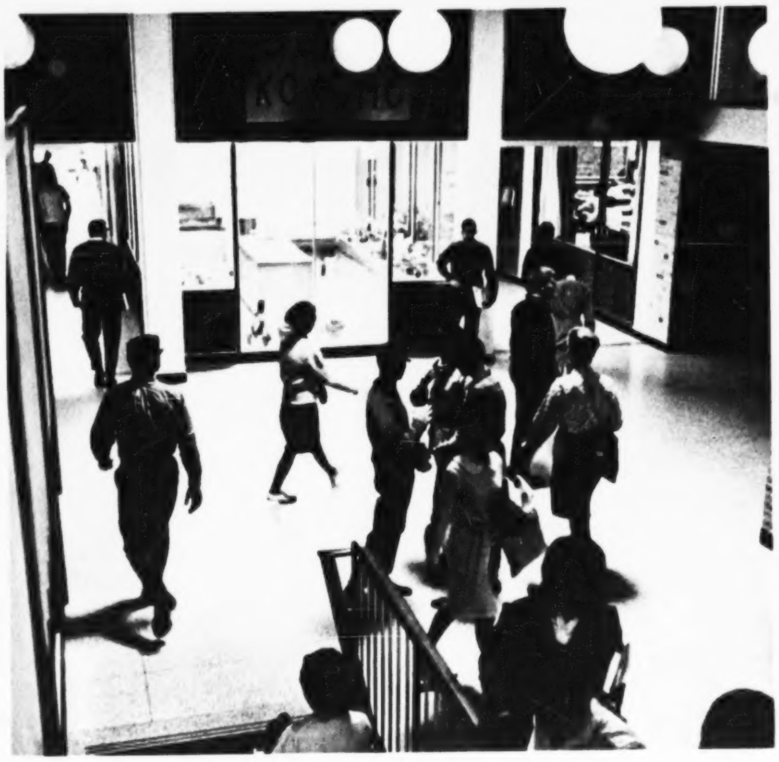
- *In the classroom:* Field trips take children out of the confines of their classroom into the community; class builds a solar system for the school lobby; scientist parent visits class to lecture on space dynamics; students have an exchange of letters, handcrafts with a class from another country; unusual art techniques or art exhibit.

- *In the curriculum:* Teachers and students learn in a new language laboratory; new math contrasted with the old; units of a sixth-grade class compared to 10 years ago; special concerts for children; relation of vocational education to community job

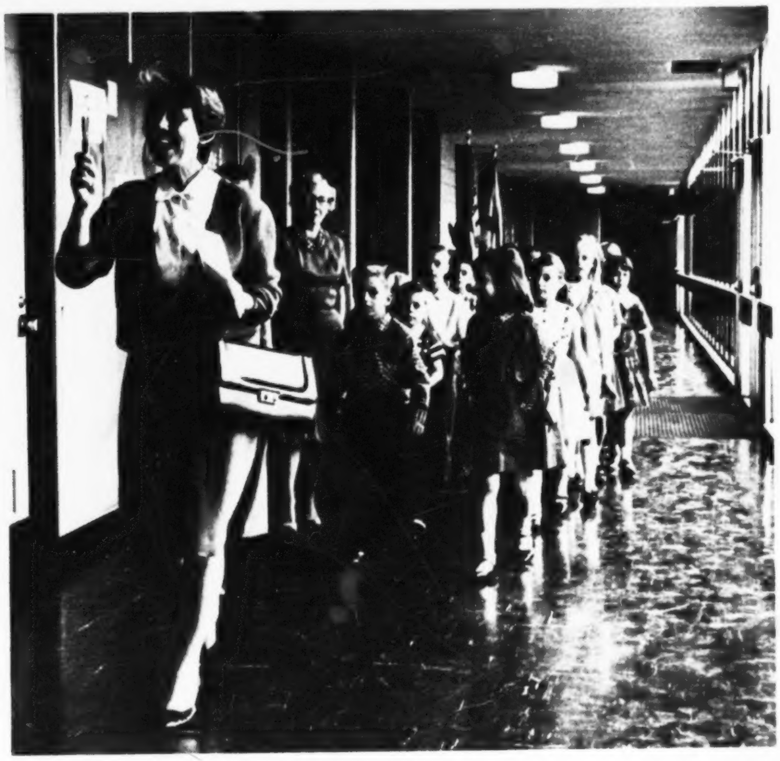
TWO VIEWS OF THE CLASSROOM of today. Attentive, expression-full children listen to a lesson over earphones. Behind the scenes, a teacher operates a master control panel that will transmit taped lessons to one or many classrooms at the same time. A FAMILIAR SCENE, from a different angle (right), of a teacher posting an art exhibit in a deserted after-school-hours hall.

opportunities; innovations in consumer education.

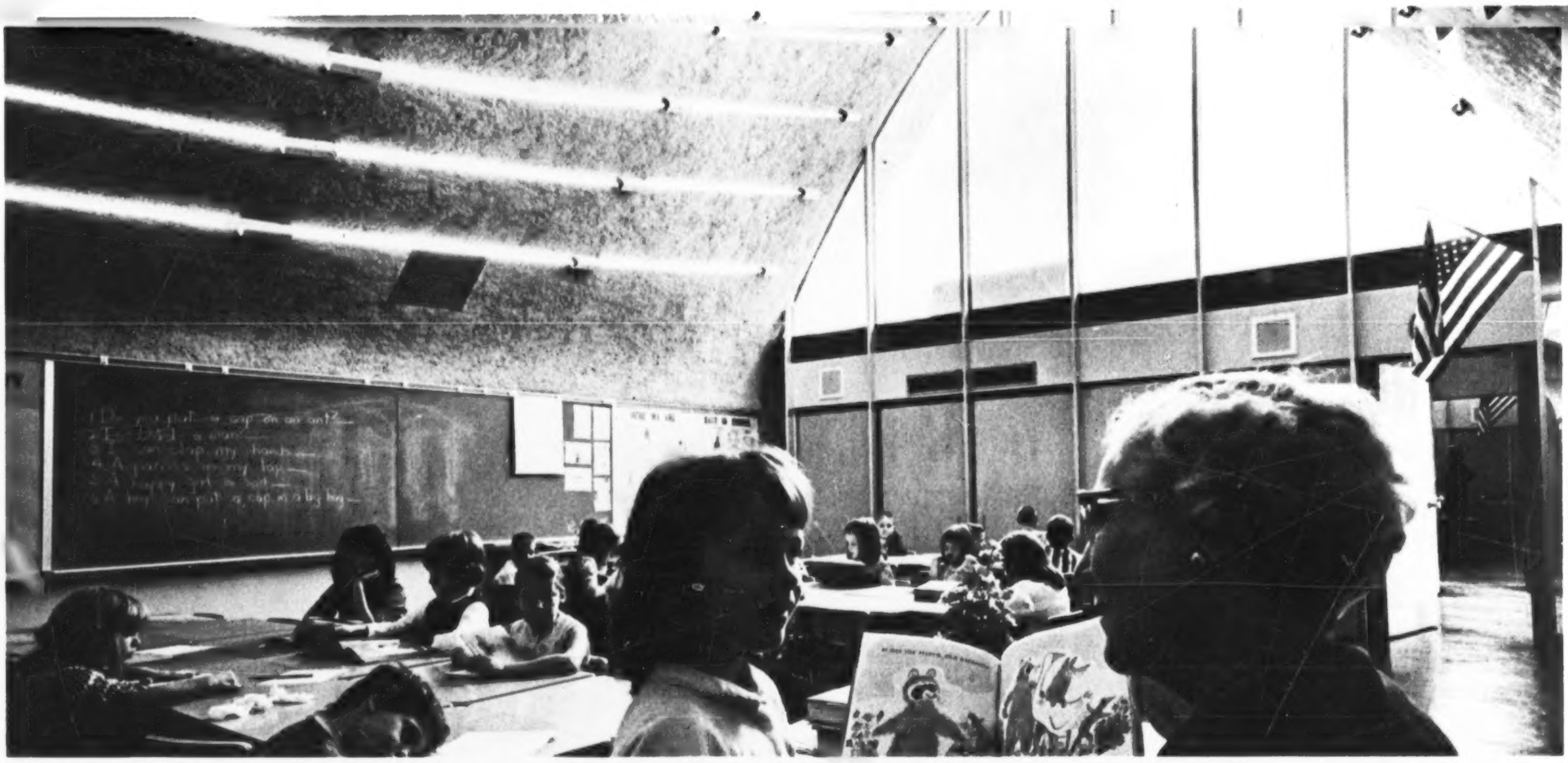
- *In the students:* What it takes to be scholarship and award winners; students hold mock political convention; students contribute to community—plant trees, donate time to community services; unusual hobby interests growing out of school work.
- *In the teachers:* Interviews with new local, state, or national office-holders; reminiscing of outstanding retiring teacher; how teachers keep up with curriculum developments; comments of a student teacher during a day's work.
- *In the nonteaching staff:* The trials and tribulations of a school bus driver; interview with cafeteria supervisor on nutrition, volume of food prepared, etc.; day in the life of a school secretary, or the unsung school employee—the custodian.
- *In the central office:* How the school census is planned and carried out; plans for future school sites; interpretation of system-wide test results; background of new curriculum projects or experiments.



ARCHITECTURE WITH ACTION. High school students rush to classes through the halls of a building with glass-enclosed offices and classrooms, balls of light.



FOLLOW THE LEADER, down the hallway of a new glass-walled elementary school. Candid photograph illustrates architectural points better than an empty school.



AN ARCH ABOVE, a student and a teacher below. Under the new dome-shaped roof, with its special lighting, teaching and learning go on as usual, brightened by modern surroundings.

ONE PICTURE, TWO FLOORS. The variety of architecture in this new high school is illustrated by one photograph and given action through the students on each floor.

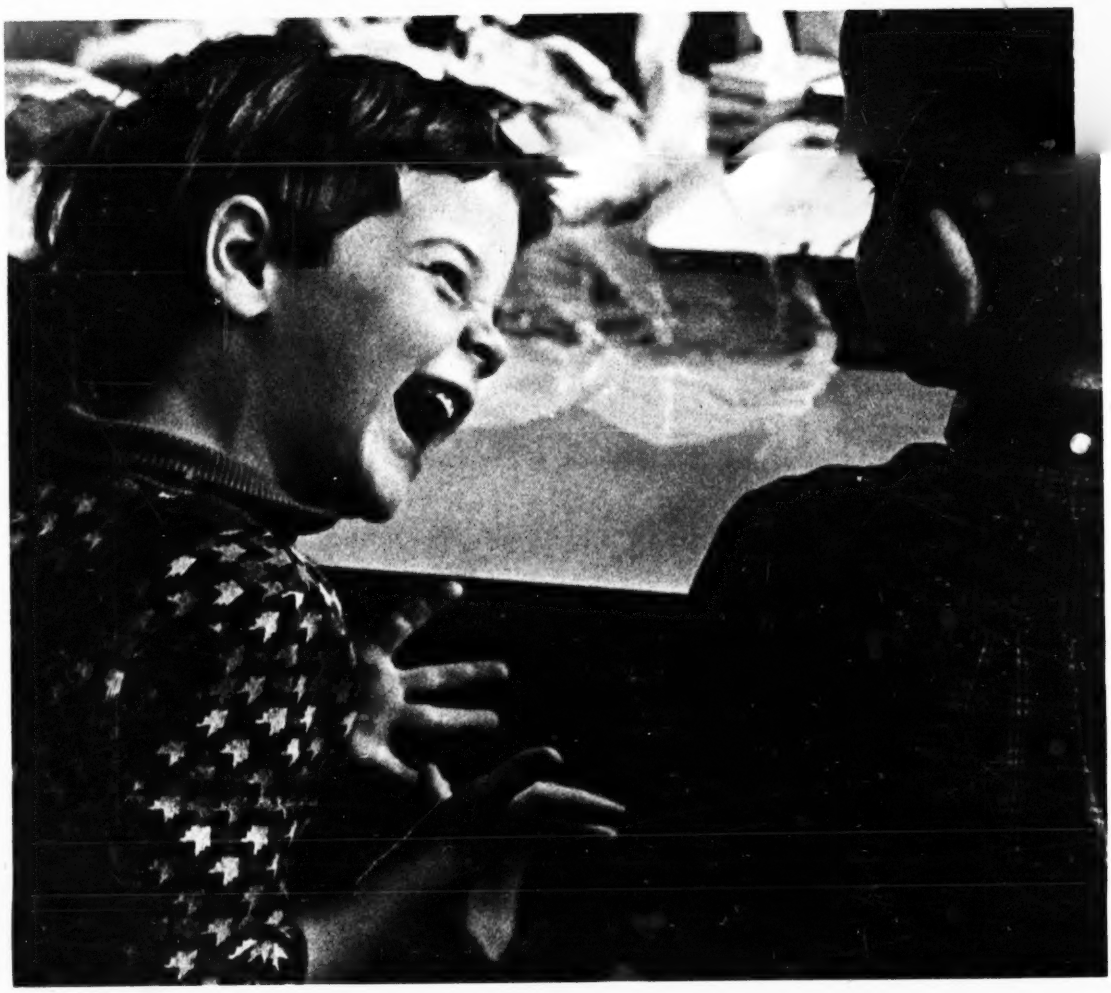
Photo Story

Almost all feature stories, and many news stories, can be improved with the use of photographs, charts, or other art work (a dull budget story might make front page if it is accompanied by an interesting pie-shaped chart on expenditures and income).

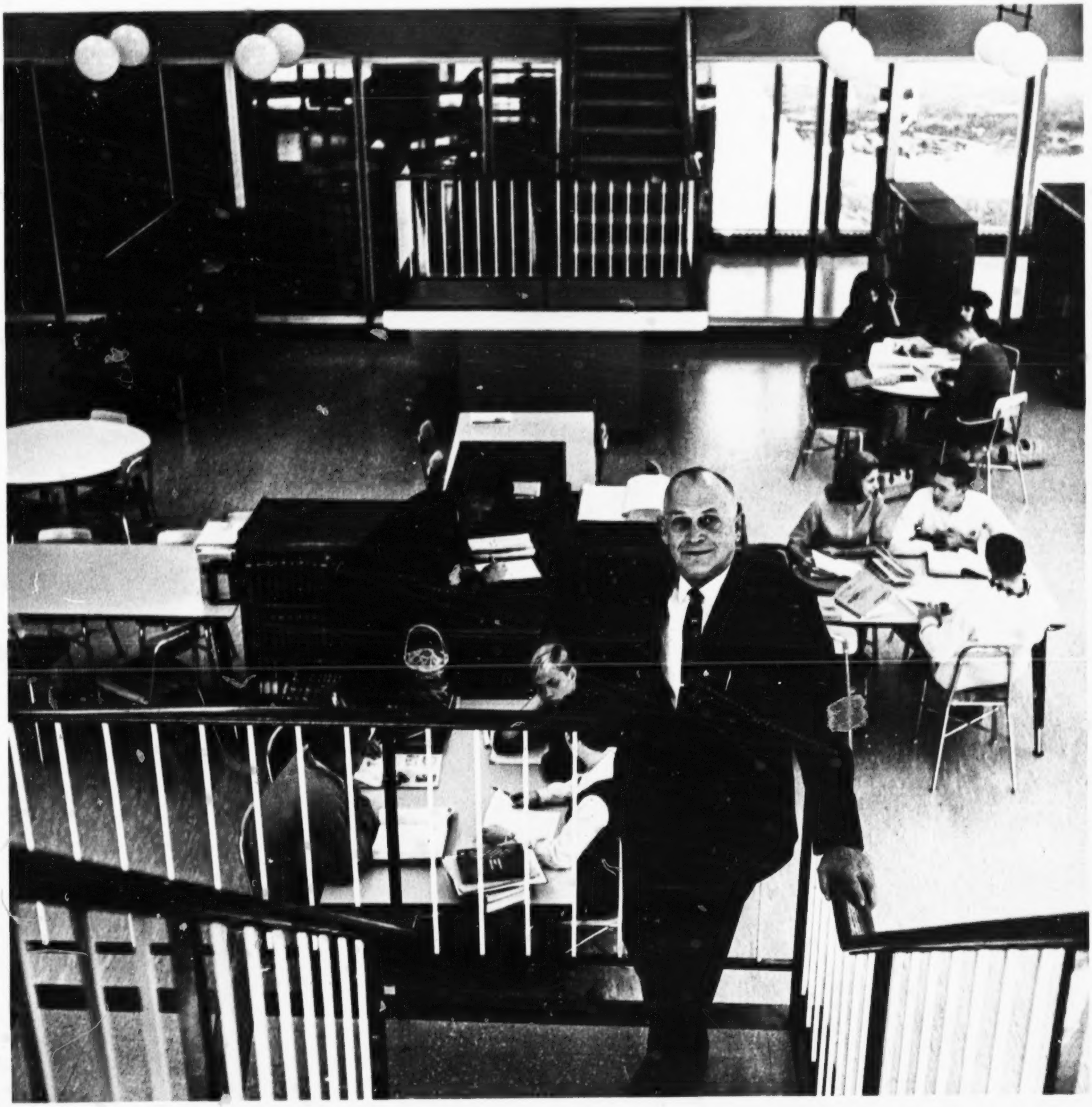
Often a feature is all photographs, with explanatory cutlines. Journalism schools teach that a picture is worth 10,000 words, but it must be a good picture or it can waste words.

Photographs for news media are obtained three ways: the school system uses its own equipment or source and supplies the photographs to the editor; the reporter also doubles as photographer; or the newspaper or television station uses its own professional photographers.

If you think the proposed story is a good subject for illustrations (science fair, school play, new school facility, art exhibit), tell the reporter several days in advance of when the story might run, in case he wants to arrange for a staff photographer to make the pictures (these must be scheduled ahead of time). Also, the editor will need to know about a feature-photo story because it will require setting aside a definite amount of space in the newspaper.



AS THE STORY GOES—(1) Did you take my sandwich? (2) And feed it to the goldfish? (3) Why no, how could you say such a thing? (4) Guess what? Fish like peanut butter!



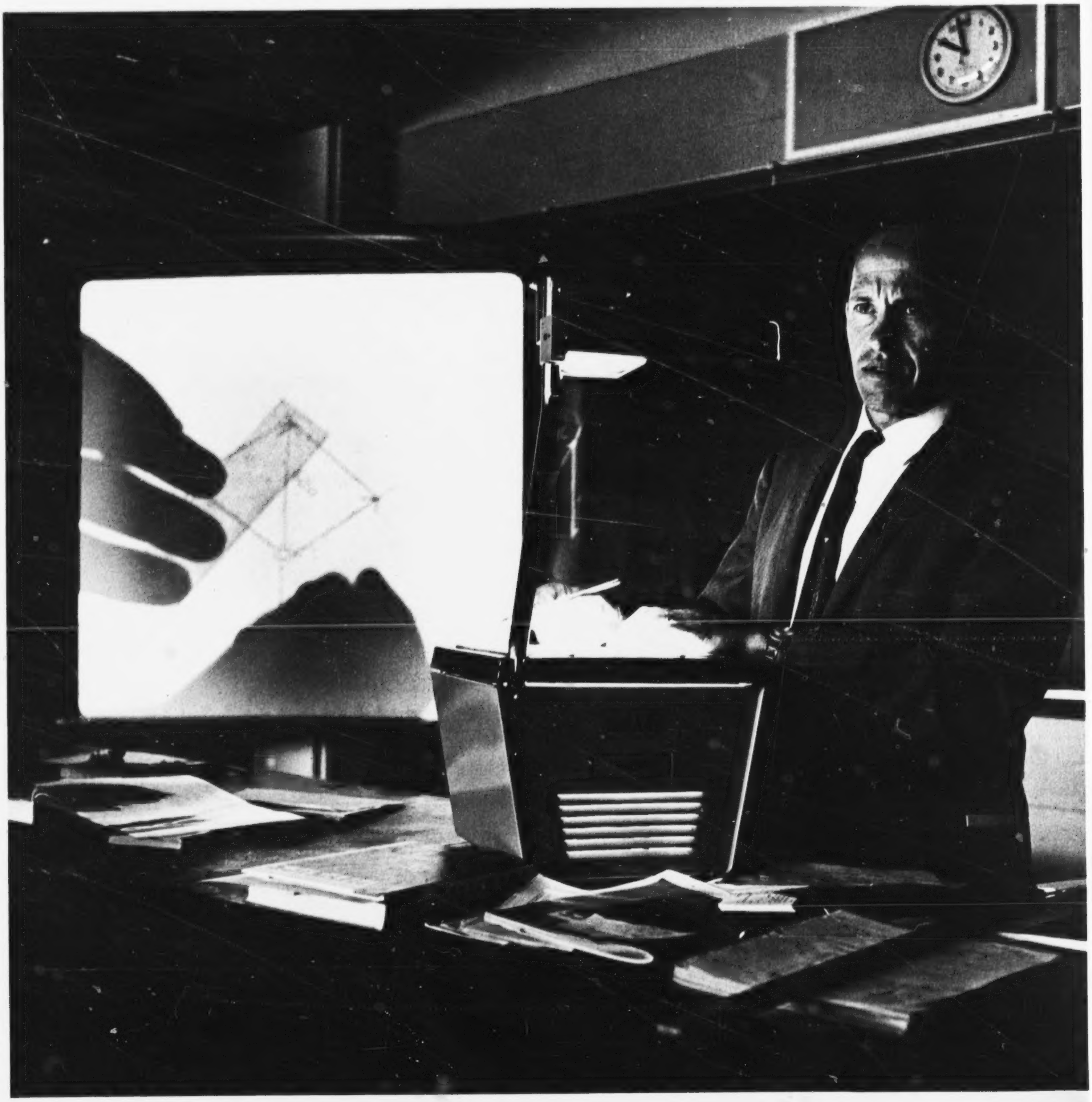
AN ADMINISTRATOR IN PERSPECTIVE. Away from the usual background of desk or faculty room, this principal looks more his part in a photograph that illustrates new library facilities.

In working with staff photographers from the newspaper or TV station, let them make their own decisions. They know best about the composition of a picture and should receive only simple explanations from you as to what the photograph should illustrate. They perhaps will use two children instead of the 20 lined up by a teacher or a corner of a room rather than a spectrum taken from the back door, but this is their profession and their privilege.

If you are your own photographer, some broad principles outlined by the editors of *LOOK* in a book, *School Photojournalism* (published by the National School Public Relations Association), will be helpful:

"To achieve maximum impact in our photograph-symbol—to make it as vivid and eye-catching as possible—we must achieve: 1) drama and emotion, 2) action, 3) sharp characterization, 4) composition and strong play of light and shadow. All top-quality photographs of people will have these four qualities in varying degrees." The editors point out that "children do not react well to posing," but "they are splendid photo subjects when caught unaware." Other suggestions:

- Be selective in the opportunities for human interest in the photos, such as



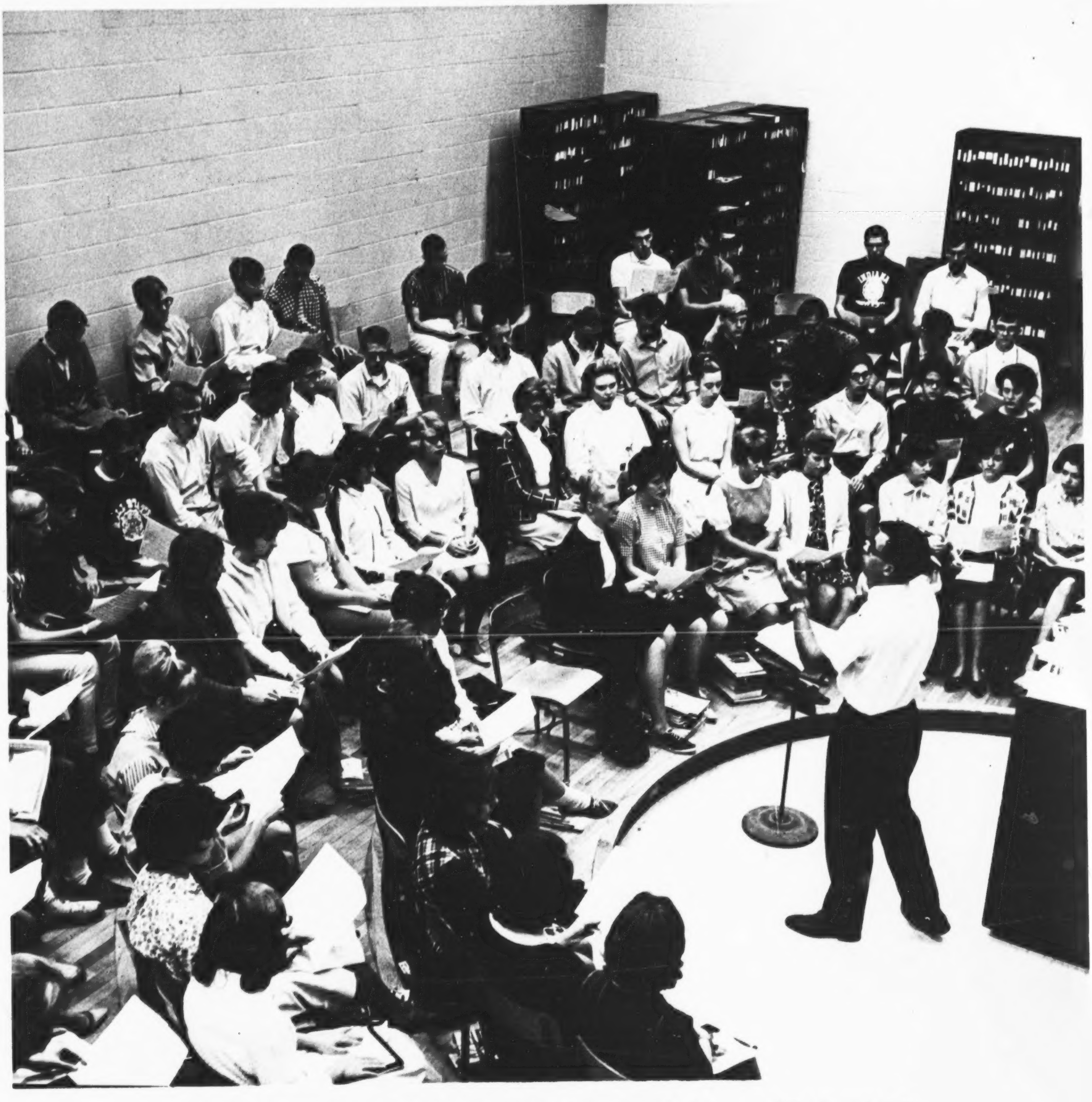
PHYSICS ON THE SCREEN. Close-up photograph of a teacher using an overhead projector has action, clear illustration of a new teaching technique. Photographer must be familiar with lighting for a picture of this kind.

a young child enthusiastically answering a teacher's question, and also selective in the subject—"some people react more actively to a given situation than others."

- Photographic coverage of school affairs can be done with a minimum of equipment. There are three basic cameras—35mm with f/2 lens or faster; 2¼″ x 2¼″ reflex camera with f/3.5 lens or faster; or a 4″ x 5″ camera with f/4.5 lens or faster. Other equipment should include an exposure meter, a flash unit, a lightweight tripod, and possibly a few lens filters. Also, there are many fine quality automatic cameras, which, with fast film, can be used without special lighting techniques or tripods. One camera company makes a special adapter for press cameras which allows this type of camera to take a 4″ x 5″ high quality picture in 10 seconds, larger than a regular polaroid picture. These are suitable for newspaper reproduction, and many small newspapers make regular use of them because it helps them meet deadlines and eliminates the need for a photo lab.

- For reproduction in newspapers or other printed matter, 5″ x 7″ or 8″ x

LIFE IN THE LUNCHROOM. An alert photographer looks for subjects with special qualities for either candid or posed shots—a pixie face, an intense expression, an all-round American boy look. Children will be more relaxed and curious if the photographer uses an automatic camera without flash equipment.



THE SONG COMES THROUGH the camera's eye. Crowd shots are difficult and dull unless they illustrate action in an unposed manner, as this choir rehearsal.

10′ glossy or semi-glossy prints give the best results. The contrasts (light against dark) should be strong.

- When submitting captions, avoid stating the obvious. Rather, add information that is not immediately explained by the picture. Captions must be brief, clear, and to the point.

Other do-it-yourself rules for photo coverage of the schools would include:

- Avoid posed group scenes as you would the mumps. Have subjects in picture close together. No proclamation signings and the like, please.
- The background should be light and plain (fancy wallpaper or a lot of furniture only confuse the scene). Avoid using blackboards or bulletin boards as backgrounds (blackboards present a shadow problem, bulletin boards are too cluttered). Photo subjects should be at least three feet from the wall to avoid shadows.
- When photographing school buildings, entrances or interesting parts of the structure, e.g., study carrels, new equipment rooms, unusual architecture on the outside, are frequently more impressive than an over-all pic-

ture. If using a close-up of the building try to include students in the photo.

- An over-all suggestion on techniques. Because most schools are now well lighted and there have been outstanding improvements in film speed and lenses, there is little reason for the school photographer to use flash. Also, there are many advantages to available light photography. It eliminates harsh shadows and black backgrounds, but even more important—it makes the camera and photographer less obtrusive and makes possible more candid and natural pictures.

Localized News

Frequently, to the educators' dismay, a newspaper will front-page a wire or syndicated story on education that could have had local impact and tie-in, but didn't.

A national feature on language laboratories ignores the planning that your school system has done to provide space for laboratories in new buildings; a speech by an important expert indicates testing programs used by schools, but the story in your newspaper doesn't mention new local policies to balance external testing demands; a national story describes increased enrollments—what about the increases in your school system, by grades, by areas, in adult education, in special courses?

Unfortunately, school people cannot check the wire services daily or know what syndicated Sunday feature the newspaper is planning to use, but you can be ahead instead of behind on the timing.

- Sift through major ideas that you pick up at conferences and meetings or through education journals and current education sources, e.g., *Education U.S.A.* and *Trends* newsletters, and determine what are major trends that do or will affect your school system, and that seem to be interesting the public elsewhere. Develop ideas for localizing this interest and discuss them with education reporters. They may not use the ideas right away, but if a national story comes through which ties in with the background you have given, it is likely that the national story will be localized (newsmen are always looking for local angles).
- If a story does appear which has local

implications, contact the reporters *immediately* with full details or suggestions for more information (a delay of even half a day may be too late). At the least, if it is an important story, offer comments from the superintendent, the business manager, the curriculum supervisor, or whoever is the specialist affected by the story.

- If reporters contact you for facts or comments that will localize a story, be as cooperative and quick as possible. Make as much effort as they do to find a local tie-in.

Annual Stories

As different as each school year may seem to the school administrator, there is a pattern of activities repeated each year, predictable events which are annually newsworthy.

The best way to remember them is to keep a monthly calendar of possibilities for news stories (by making a year-round calendar you perhaps could see ways to schedule news story announcements so that there would be reports on the school system at regular intervals—weekly, if possible—during the year).

If the education reporter is new on his "beat," why not give him a copy of the year-round news developments so that he can get an over-all picture of school activities?

What your calendar might look like:

September: Registration plans and results; first-day feature on new teacher, kindergarten class, bus driver, etc.; new speakers bureau list for community organizations; inservice training plans for the year.

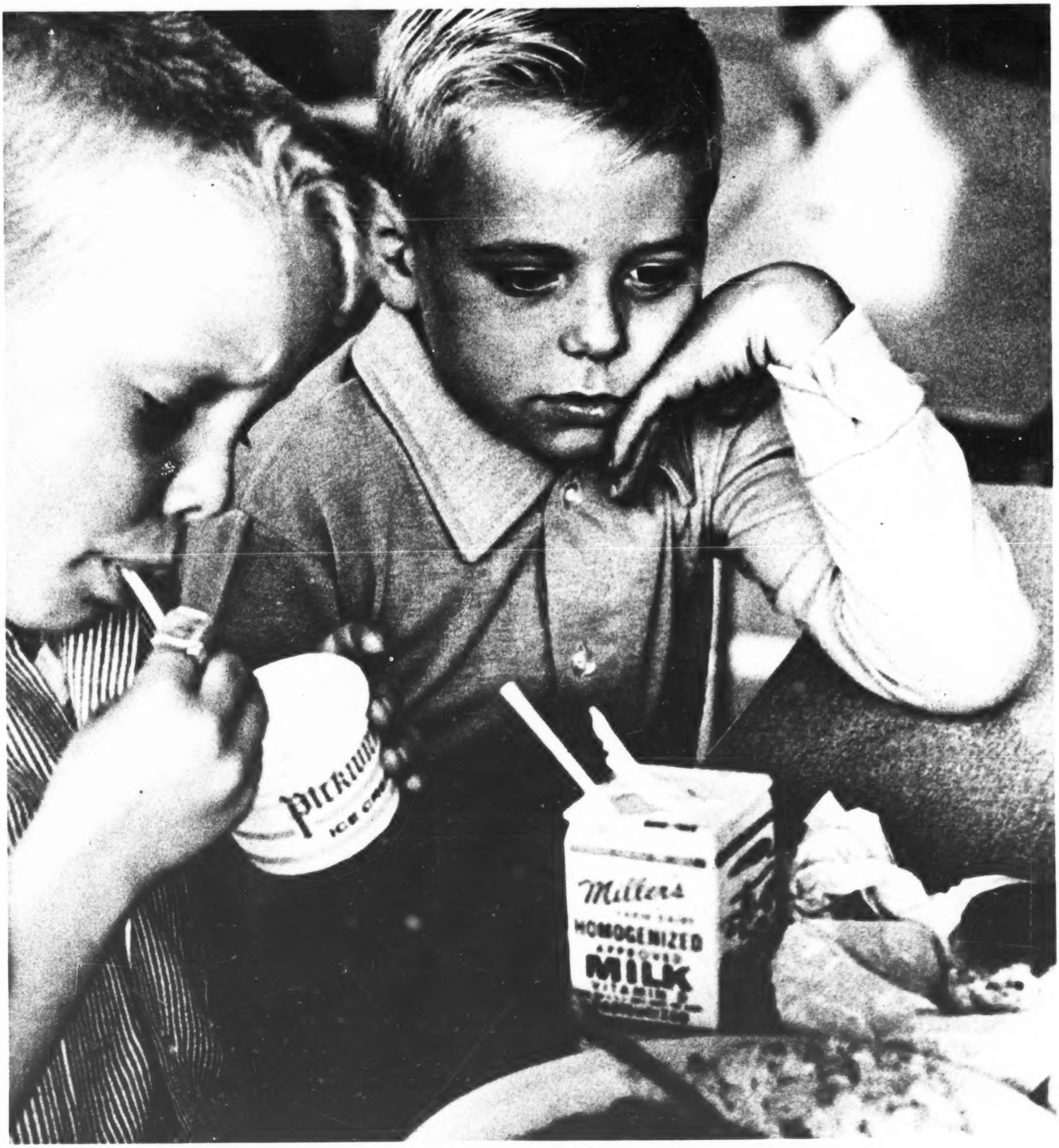
October: Feature on parent-teacher conferences; new curriculum plans; plans for school system surveys or testing programs; new instructional materials.

November: Annual report; American Education Week; travel policies and coming conferences to be attended; special reports to the board.

December: Review of educational highlights of school system during the year; textbook selection process; new building construction.

January: Any changes in reporting procedures to parents; follow-up study of last year's high school graduates; teacher recruitment plans.

February: System-wide test results; high school counseling program; feature on record-keeping system or cafe-


Miller's
HOMOGENIZED
MILK
ICE CR

THAT HUNGRY LOOK, or, why didn't he finish his beans? I did. School lunch program is more appetizing when illustrated with expressive children, rather than boxes of food or smiling cooks.

teria services; innovations in health program.

March: New budget preparations; cooperative research programs with universities, other school systems; feature on music curriculum.

April: Job and college plans of upcoming graduates; scholarship and award winners; exhibits; Teaching Career Month; parent orientation.

May: Graduation plans; summer school plans; proposed budget; new administrative assignments.

June: Summer maintenance program; teacher recruitment results; budget adoption; recreational opportunities available at schools.

July: Roundup of faculty activities during summer; feature on summer school; progress on new buildings.

August: Staff orientation; expected enrollment; feature on nonteaching personnel, or preparing school libraries for new year. Contact newspapers on back-to-school stories — enrollment, transportation, new programs, etc.

2

5

WHAT ABOUT THE EXTRAS?

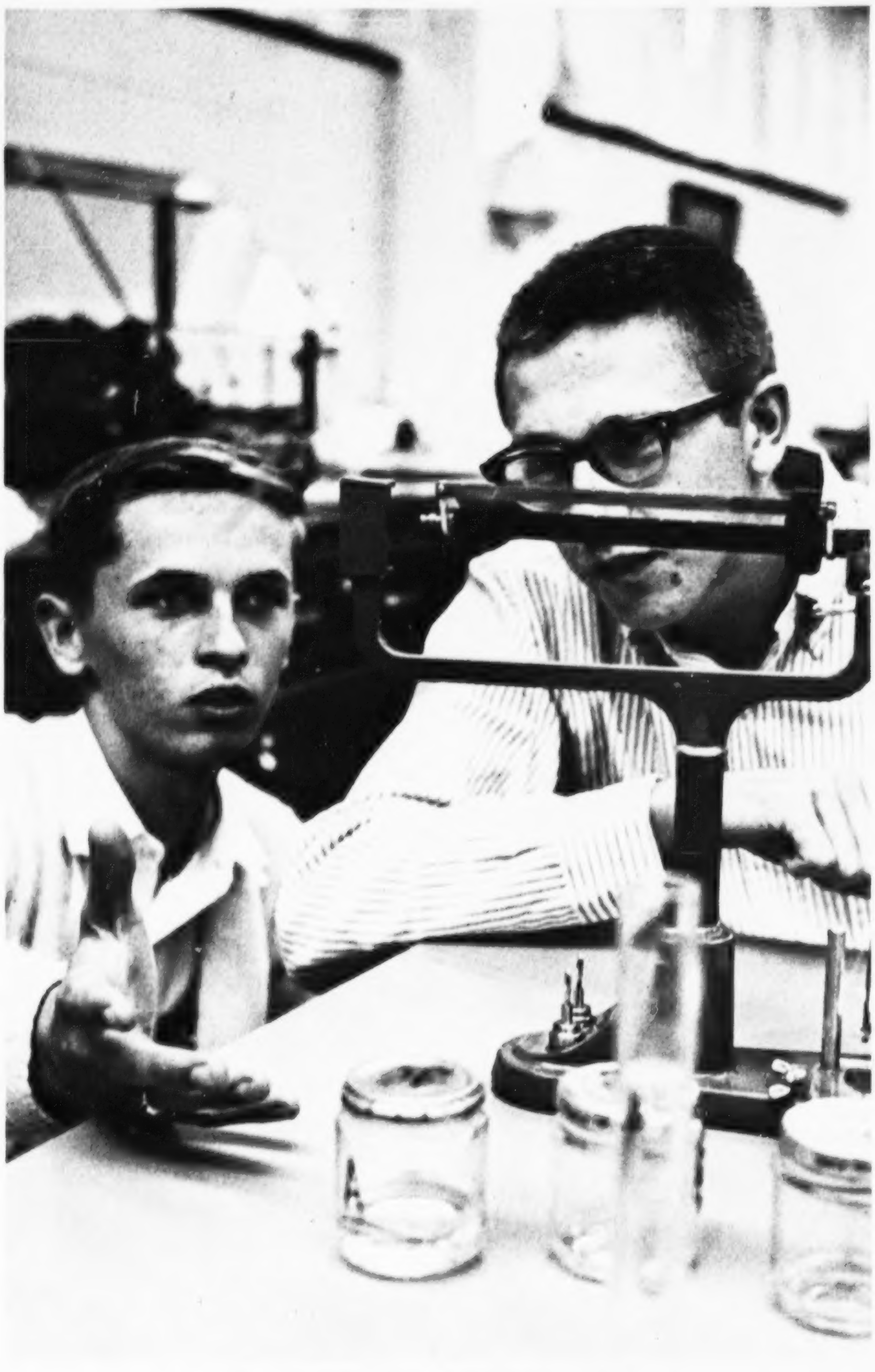
There are many other high spots in a newspaper besides the front page. And many ways for education to be looked at from different angles.

Columns or Series

Frequently, in small towns or small newspapers, editors will ask superintendents to write weekly columns on education so that the reading public will get local, personal approaches to school news. This has its advantages—school news becomes a regular part of the newspaper, the superintendent has an opportunity to explain in detail various phases of the school program, and the superintendent becomes a "personality" to the public. The column, as a constant public relations vehicle, also is a handy tool for the school administrator when a crisis arises and he needs an immediate resource to reach the public. But it also has its drawbacks—writing a weekly column that is consistently interesting is a time-consuming task; the topics must not be so bland or so controversial as to have a negative public relations effect.

If you do decide to contribute regular columns to the newspaper, outline a series of topics well ahead of time and discuss them with the editor, be definite about deadlines, and write several columns be-

SHOP TALK, an exchange between a teacher and a student shows the concern of the teacher, safety precautions for the student.



THE WONDER OF DISCOVERY shows on the faces of two laboratory students. It would have been lost in a photograph of the whole classroom or one too cluttered with people and equipment.

fore publication begins so that you will be ahead of schedule.

As a substitute for a column, you might suggest to the editor a series of regular articles on some phase of the school program—elementary education; high school career preparations; various duties of nonteaching personnel. A small newspaper might find a series on new teachers and administrators worthwhile. Other regular school news for newspapers might include a PTA calendar, a weekly list of the school lunch menus, or a column on high school *activities* (not chitchat).

Editorials

There is no part of a newspaper more sacred to an editor than his editorial page, and we mention it as a possibility for education coverage not to suggest that you write editorials (which would be highly unacceptable to a probably indignant editor), but to urge you to be as helpful to editors or editorial writers in forming their opinions as you are to reporters writing basic stories.

Occasionally, superintendents and public relations personnel of school systems receive "canned editorials," those written by an outside source on a broad topic and distributed widely. Unless your community has a very small newspaper with a limited staff, these pre-written editorials will not be used *en toto,* but they can do two things—provide you with an opportunity to talk personally with the editorial writers, and/or provide the writers with background ideas.

But you do not need to wait for canned material for an opportunity to have contact with those who form and write the editorials. First, by establishing personal, trusting relationships with editors you have laid the basis for good opinion of the schools—your year-round efforts will influence the tone and style of the newspaper's position.

Also, if you have an important story —a new bond issue, budget increases, big changes in the curriculum, results of an opinion survey—the editorial writers would appreciate background information. Although the education reporter probably will receive copies of the details of the budget or the survey, suggest that he deliver extra copies to the editor or the editorial writers for their consideration.

Letters to the Editor

In a sense the letters to the editor column of a newspaper contains editorials written by readers, and several surveys of readership have shown that this is one of the most popular features of a newspaper. Used positively, it can become a tool of the school system's press relations. (If, however, it is used only when the superintendent or other school people have a gripe, it can create a negative public image for the schools.)

Letters to the editor from the superintendent can compliment good coverage of a story or a series of stories. When there is some disagreement between the superintendent and the newspaper on the emphasis in a story, not the facts, a letter to the editor can clarify the superintendent's position without putting an editor into a corner (editors never want to admit that they have been wrong, and are most unlikely to retract or amplify what they consider an interpretation, so a tactful, positive letter on the subject is a good compromise for both the editor and you).

When you hear parents enthusiastically praise some phase of the school program—citizenship training, new teaching methods, activities of one particular teacher—ask them to put it in writing—to the editor. Also, during bond campaigns, letters to the editor from parents often can do more persuading than front-page facts or editorial pleas.

Student Pages

While a superintendent may decide not to contribute regularly to a newspaper, students who enjoy writing welcome such assignments with vigor, and often display a great deal of talent. Student pages usually are written by journalism students under the direction of a teacher or a reporter. The assignments are part of class work. However, because the writing does appear in a commercial publication, the superintendent or school public relations director should remember that although the pages are intended primarily for students, they will be read also by parents and citizens who have no children in school. A few "do's" are important:

- Do be sure that the newspaper and the students have set definite rules for deadlines and amount of copy, and that the student writers faithfully observe the rules (the school system's public relations with the press goes down drastically each minute that the presses are held up or each time the editor has to fill in space that he had expected to be taken up with student news).
- Do challenge the students to be professional writers and not gossip chasers.

If the public sees columns of anonymous social notes overwhelming the news of important activities, awards, excursions, features, etc., it will wonder what priorities exist within the school.

- Do set high standards on grammar, punctuation, and spelling in the student contributions. Editors and copyreaders don't always have time to rewrite the copy, and mistakes that are printed in the paper reflect on the teachers and students.

Special Issues

The best-known special issue on education is the annual back-to-school supplement. Sometimes it is prepared entirely by the local newspaper staff; sometimes it is a supplement supplied each year by the wire services to their hundreds of member newspapers. Most often it is a combination of the two, developed through cooperative efforts between the school system and the newspaper staff.

There are other opportunities for special issues—dedication of a new high school, anniversary of the chartering of the school district, big bond issue campaign, special recognition day for retiring teachers or long-term teachers. If a newspaper decides on such a special issue, it will be giving the school system a good opportunity for public relations and a heavy responsibility to cooperate in the suggesting of ideas and the gathering of information for the special issue.

A NEW WAY TO LEARN, in language laboratory carrels. Photograph shows students listening and recording individually, and equipment used for the class as a whole. Overview shows more than an individual picture.

6

HOW TO WRITE THE COPY

"Clean copy" is a working press term that has nothing to do with the whiteness of the paper used in a news release. It means that the story is well written, has all of the facts correct, and conforms to the newspaper's style.

Your ability to be reliable and factual and to follow rudimentary newspaper style is very important.

The most basic rule in the journalism profession is to be accurate—on all facts, little as well as big. It is not enough to believe or suppose that a name is spelled correctly, or a date and place are right, or a quote is accurate. Newspaper offices are too busy to correct the "supposes" of copy submitted to them by a supposedly reliable source.

Almost all newspapers have their own style book which outlines the preferred way of abbreviating, capitalizing, using figures, and other mechanics of writing. If these style books are not available to the public (the papers should be glad to supply your office with one), then the best method is to study each newspaper to determine its style.

As for the general form of writing:

- Type your story double spaced on one side only of standard 8½ x 11" paper, leaving a good margin on both sides (there is no excuse for a press relations contact to submit news in handwriting).

- It's professional to suggest a headline for each news release. Either one or two lines, it will give the editor or reporter an "at a glance" idea of what the news release concerns. It should be brief, no more than four words to a line, written in capital letters at the left side of the paper.
- Start typing about halfway down the first page. This will leave room for the editors to write in a headline.
- If the story runs more than one page, type "more" at the bottom of each page, and on the last page type "end" or the newspaper term "30."
- In the upper left-hand corner, type the name of your school system (if you are not using special letterhead paper for your news releases), address, telephone number, and your name as the contact. In the upper right-hand corner, type and underline the release date.
- Use full names, and if it is a woman use "Miss" or "Mrs." Avoid using nicknames of students. If the name has an unusual spelling, e.g., Jon instead

CLASSROOM CHARACTERS, the world that belongs to a teacher each school day. Newspapers would welcome a file of candid pictures such as these to use at random when they have tie-in feature stories. Again, automatic camera equipment was the key to these successful individual pictures.

of John or Smythe for Smith, write the symbol "CQ" after the name to indicate to the editor that the proper spelling is being used.

As for the content of the writing:

- Remember that newspapers and copy for broadcasting are written for people of all levels of education and interests. Words, sentences, and paragraphs are short and uncomplicated.
- Use the "inverted pyramid" in your arrangement of facts. This is a newspaper writing style which always puts the most important facts in the "lead," the first paragraph; and adds facts or explanations of them in order of diminishing importance. Editors fit copy to the space available after the advertisements have been drawn in for each page, and most of the time stories are trimmed from the bottom up to fill a certain number of inches.
- For a news story, gather together as many of the five "W's" as possible. But don't put them all into the lead paragraph, which should be brief and to the point. The essential facts will be the who, what, where, when, why, and frequently how.

- Always write the story in the third person. Avoid personal comments unless they are direct quotes and the name of the person is given (always check the quote with the source, even if it is from a public speech).
- Routine stories should not require more than one typed double-spaced page. Important or unusual stories will require more, but editors are quick to realize that an overly long story is not necessarily good or important. They call this "padding," and are likely to throw it away. Or condense it to one paragraph just to show you how it's done.
- Feature stories, naturally, ignore the pyramid version of writing, and sometimes the last sentence is the most important one of the story. The length of a feature should be whatever the writer believes is necessary to tell the story.

Once written, news releases can be handled in several ways. If time is short, or importance needs to be emphasized, they should be hand-carried or sent by messenger to newspapers or personally given to reporters. Regular news releases also may be given directly to reporters, but be sure that all reporters receive them at approximately the same time. If mailing news releases, use first-class mail.

The Telephone Story

Reporters will use the telephone to recheck facts and names and, most important of all, to save time. This frequently happens when there is a fast-breaking news story. There are several "do's" and "don'ts" regarding giving a story over the telephone:

- Do realize the urgency of the reporter and his situation. If he needs facts, assemble them as quickly as possible. If you delegate the fact-finding mission to someone else, be sure that he understands the importance of returning the call as soon as possible. If a reporter wants opinions, give him a statement immediately or a "no comment" immediately. Stalling or off-the-record comments when the rush is on will only make matters worse.
- Don't tell a reporter something and then later say you don't remember. If the telephone call is about a "touchy" situation or a controversial policy, write your comments down immediately or have another person "witness" the comments on an extension telephone.

- When giving names over the telephone, spell them out. Many letters like b, c, t, and e sound alike. Say "b" as in "baker"; "c" as in "cat," etc. Even the most common proper names frequently are spelled various ways.
- Do encourage reporters to contact you by telephone. It is better for a reporter working at night to call you at home than to write something erroneous.

7

HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR NEWS

Let's begin at the top. Certainly the school superintendent is responsible for interpreting the schools' program to the public, but except in very small school systems he cannot be superintendent and press officer, too. Each is a specialty, requiring certain background and experience, as well as interest, and each is a full-time job.

The person the press contacts for school information can have many names —public relations director, information director, press relations officer. Such titles as "publicity" director or "agent" are rarely used and are usually to be avoided. They are not accurate titles, and they are interpreted by newspaper people as pushing free advertising, rather than helping to explain a public service.

Through his office should flow all news from the school system, other than that created directly by the superintendent, and the superintendent who is public relations conscious will use the public relations director as an adviser and planner for his PR policies. Some school systems, in addition to a public relations office, utilize the advice of a public relations committee, usually made up of other administrators and teachers.

Channeling all news through one office should not be looked upon as "censorship" by the individual schools and teachers, and if the approach to gathering news is one of cooperation, others in the school system will realize that centralizing the news service is a more efficient and successful way of working with the press. If each school sent lists of scholarship winners or May Day programs directly to newspaper offices, the outcome would be chaotic and unsatisfactory.

Besides centralizing the news, the public relations office of the school system makes and maintains the contacts with all news media; keeps a date book, preferably on a year-round basis; keeps a file on all news releases and published reports; and keeps a file of news contacts, their working hours, and home phone numbers.

While organization begins at the top, news usually starts from the bottom. The classroom is the wellspring of a press relations program, and for you to be an effective public relations officer, teachers must be a part of your program.

- Through orientation sessions or special workshops, teachers should know the mechanics of your press relations program (whom to tell what, when, and where). By using examples from your city newspapers or others and from public relations programs, you can give them ideas that turn into good stories. (Many school systems have held public relations clinics in each school.)

- Establish a procedure for speeding news ideas from classrooms to you. Either the principal or designated teachers in each building could be your contact. Each building could be supplied with forms on which the teachers or principal would tell about classroom plans that might make news stories, and these would be sent directly to you. However, don't let the forms discourage individuals from contacting you or your office directly.

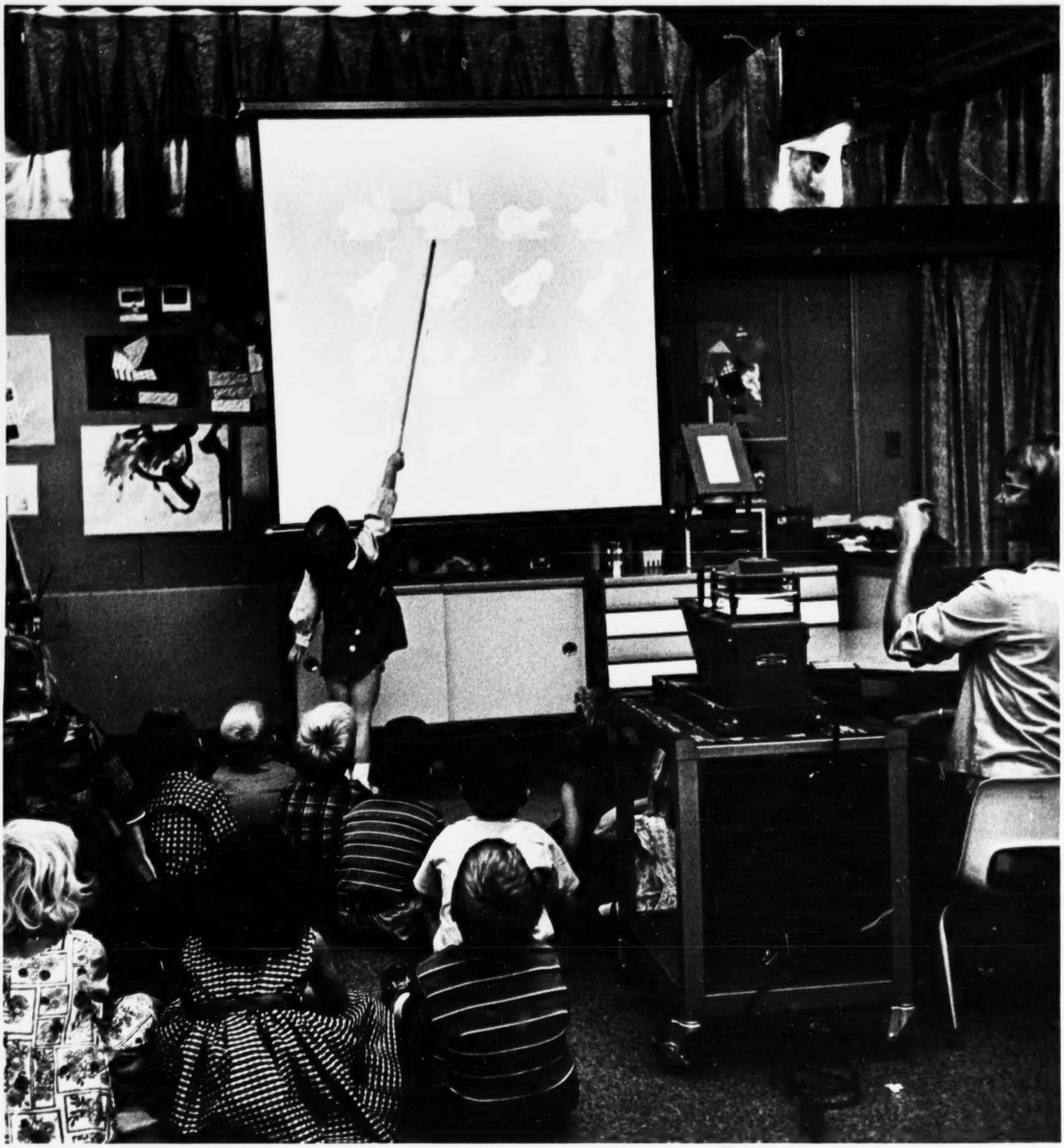
- If individual principals or teachers do send news tips directly to the news media, be sure that your office receives a copy of them (not for censoring, but for record-keeping). Have an understanding with reporters that if they want to work directly with classroom teachers on a story, either the principal or you are to be notified (again, this is a matter of keeping up with the press, not keeping it down). Too rigid rules about access to teachers and classrooms will rankle reporters, who, except in rare instances, are interested in good stories, not derogatory ones.

Give the reporter a chance to get his story as easily and quickly as possible. Don't shut the classroom door on him. At the same time, reporters should not be allowed to disrupt the school or classroom activities. Rules must maintain order, but they need not make it difficult for the reporter to do his job.

Hold Press Conferences

Ordinarily, the idea of a press conference conjures up something "big," a gigantic news announcement that cannot be handled in the regular fashion. This isn't necessarily so, and some of the most successful press conferences held by school systems are regular parts of the press policy—sometimes every week—when reporters are free to ask questions of the superintendent or other school administrators on any topic. One school system, in a small city, holds a press conference for the public as well as reporters, when citizens are welcome to ask the superintendent about education matters, either local or national.

If press conferences are not a regular part of your press relations, then they should be reserved for special announcements—annual report, bond issues, big



THE CLUTTER OF THE CLASSROOM, with a focal point on the projector screen. Classroom has carpeted floor, the latest equipment, and a tiny, pointing, center of interest.

change in the curriculum. To make it successful:

- Notify all news media at least a day in advance, giving them a brief idea as to the purpose of the press conference.
- Distribute a prepared statement on the subject at the conference. But don't waste time reading the manuscript to the reporters—they know how to read and are more interested in asking questions that will help them to interpret the announcement.
- Scale the press conference room to size. A barn-like atmosphere makes a small cluster of reporters just as uncomfortable as if they were standing three deep and tripping over chairs, people, and camera equipment. If you will have radio-TV coverage, be sure that there are sufficient electrical outlets. Have plenty of paper and pencils on hand.
- Have your press conference participants on time and on their toes. The conference could turn into a shambles if the superintendent or others involved have not been briefed thoroughly on the press conference subject.

(Note: Board members and administrators should "touch base" with the school public relations director before making off-the-cuff remarks in public. Occasionally weeks and months of hard work go down the drain as a result of unnecessary criticism of the press, labor, churches, chambers of commerce, etc. Often public officials become tired of being fair game for the critics. But a tough hide and a studied silence are necessary—or a private discussion will serve better than using the press to debate the critics.)

Handle School Board Meetings

Your school board meetings are open to the public.

Every action of a school board taken behind closed doors, no matter how small or how justified, will be under suspicion by the public and, particularly, the press, which believes that it is the public's watchdog. It may be necessary for the school board, in rare instances, to study and discuss actions in private—acquisition of new sites, legal discussions, dismissal proceedings against personnel—but the actions should be public. If the local press is responsible and in close contact with the school administration, it may be invited to sit in on a background session with the understanding that it is "off the record" (some editors, however, will tell their reporters not to accept such invitations, primarily to insure that other matters which should be public don't become "off the record," also).

School board meetings, for maximum coverage, should be held at regular times. If there is no official business for a regular meeting, the school board could hear reports from various curriculum areas, etc. When there is a competitive situation in the press, the time of the meeting could alternate between morning and afternoon or night, giving reporters an equal break on school board news.

Mimeographed agenda of the meetings are important. They should be distributed to the press a day or more in advance of the meeting. Routine reports —monthly budget figures, purchasing summaries—should be attached in full. Reporters, anticipating that the board will approve the reports without discussion, could write these stories in advance. Agenda items which include lists of names—new teachers, leaves of absence, administrative shifts—should also be attached to aid reporters with proper spelling.

Reporters also would appreciate a press table or a certain area reserved for them in the board meeting room. It should be close enough to the board to enable the reporters to hear each board member clearly, and those reporters with camera equipment will want to sit where camera shots can be handled easily. Arrangements should be made and agreements reached so that press personnel do not disturb the orderly procedure of board meetings.

If reporters don't make it to board meetings, take notes for them. Later call in important actions, or write a news release on the board meeting and take it to the news offices.

In some school systems the superintendent meets with reporters after board meetings to explain and interpret board actions.

8

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE...

Competition

Almost every school public relations director will face a competitive situation. Morning newspapers compete with afternoon or rival morning papers, weeklies vie with dailies, radio and TV attempt to scoop newspapers.

The rule is not only to avoid playing favorites but also to be especially helpful in equalizing the school news. Already mentioned is the method of alternating board meeting times to give a.m. and p.m. papers an even break over long-term coverage. Alternating news release dates on other important stories will also help to balance the coverage and the good will.

Don't forget the weekly—if you can control the time when a story breaks, set it for a day that matches the weekly press run day—probably Wednesday or Thursday—and you will have a good chance of seeing the story in both weekly and daily newspapers. A Friday release date, for example, puts the weekly newspaper a week behind the daily newspapers.

Giving an exclusive story to one reporter creates ill will among other reporters, and also will cause the favored one to question when it will be his turn to be left out of the bylines. However, if a reporter gets an exclusive story or an idea for one on his own, don't give it away to other reporters.

Help them to some bright ideas of their own.

Familiarize yourself with the available news space in newspapers. On some days there is more space than on others. Try to schedule school board meetings so that they are not competing for space with other municipal agencies including city hall, county board of supervisors, fire commissioners, etc.

An Unfavorable Press

It does happen, unfortunately. News media, as pointed out earlier, are controlled by human beings, some with narrow philosophies or plans for crusades which are not in the public interest but for a private cause.

Fortunately for school systems, parents and other citizens usually are close enough to the work and accomplishments of their schools to see through consistently biased reporting and editorializing.

Sometimes the bias towards the schools springs from an editor's unhappy experiences in school as a child, an unpleasant relationship with former school administrators, or a prejudice for private versus public education. In these instances, you might try to bring him up to date. An informal talk about some of the curriculum activities today might interest him. Or try to get him to serve on a citizens committee. Or try to approach him through the people he *will listen to*—other editors on the paper, leaders in the community, the teachers of his own children.

If the antagonism stems from the reporter assigned to cover the schools, be as cooperative and "above board" as possible. If he has a habit of inaccurate or twisted statements, have a third person present during all interviews to take notes. Try first to work out your problems with the reporter—a long discussion on philosophies of education might help you to know each other better. Take your troubles to the editor only when all else has failed and only when you have absolute proof of the antagonism of the reporter.

False Rumors or Half-True Stories

Most rumors can be prevented by a good public relations program, but once rumors begin to travel, it is very hard to stop them. Small ones can be set into perpetual motion by too much defensive attention. Ignore the minor rumors. Rumors of major proportions should be squelched by honest, direct attention. Hearsay information rarely gets into print—editors are too anxious to check out all angles to a story. The press has to be particularly careful with the facts in regard to people lest it risk the chance of being involved in a libel suit.

If a rumor persists, counteract it. If it is about poor qualification of teachers, prepare a story on the increased preparation of teachers, inservice training programs, and summer school enrollment of teachers. If it is about the quality of school construction, release a positive statement on the steps to choose contractors, their qualifications, the nature of new materials being used in the schools. A positive approach will nullify a negative rumor.

Occasionally, a reporter will misconstrue a story, take a statement out of context, or use half-facts which you believe need to be extended. First, contact the reporter and explain your criticism to him. If the story is important enough, issue a news release which will correct the information, but try not to emphasize the error. You are interested in getting the correct facts, not in putting blame. Mentioned earlier was the use of the "letters to the editor" column to reinterpret a news story. And if you find that you are not making headway with the reporter, speak to the editor about your view of the story and try to work out a follow-up that will give a truer report of the facts.

In these negotiations, it is important to remember that your goal is for the facts to reach the public, and not for the reporter to apologize or for you to be vindicated.

"Off the Record" Comments

At times you may feel that reporters and editors should know certain facts as background, even as a way of showing them that there are things that should not now be made public. Editors have different ideas as to "off the record" comments, and it would be advisable for you to check on their policies.

Be absolutely sure that the reporter knows when you go "off the record," and when you go back "on the record." This is even more important in telephone conversations. If you go back on the record without a clear understanding with the reporter, he may withold information from his stories which is used by another newsman. Your public relations and press know-how will take a plunge.

APPENDIX
A

Sample News Releases

Examples speak better than anyone else's words. The following news releases are exact copies of how some school systems—small, large, and very large—have handled certain news situations. They illustrate:

Advance on board of education meeting (New York City), page 96.

Announcement of awards program (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), page 97.

Feature story (University of Texas), page 98.

Variety of news releases from one urban school system (Los Angeles, California), pages 99-102.

Variety of news releases from a smaller school system (Fairfax County, Virginia), pages 103-105.

Localizing a state-wide study (St. Paul, Minnesota), page 106.

For Release: Wednesday PM - Thursday AM. September 2-3, 1964. N-452-63/64

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

News Bureau, Office of Education Information
Services and Public Relations

ULster 8-1000, Extensions 359-517-640

The Board of Education will hold an all-day public hearing on the proposed school construction budget for 1965-66 on Thursday, September 10. The hearing will open at 9:30 AM in the Board Room at school headquarters, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn.

The proposed 1965-66 school construction program, revised somewhat from that first proposed last spring, calls for an outlay of $210.1 million and provides for 38 new school projects for construction and 76 projects for advanced planning and site acquisition.

The hearing....

FROM:
Oshkosh High School English Department
Ken Biendarra, tri-chairman, 235-7160; 235-8750
Bernice Porterfield, tri-chairman, 235-8750

TOPIC
National Council English Awards

Five Oshkosh High School juniors have been nominated for the annual achievement awards program, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. In the six previous years of the program, Oshkosh High School has produced winners five years and a runner-up the year it did not have a winner. It is the only school in the state and one of the few in the nation with this record.

Nominated by the Oshkosh High School English Department based on a series of tests and compositions were Nancy B. Borchers, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bartel Borchers, 1630 Algoma Blvd.; Thomas B. Lloyd, son of Mr. and Mrs. Milton E. Lloyd, 824 Merritt Ave.; Jean Ellen Lueck, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Lueck, 1333 Lamar Ave.; Barbara A. Munson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Munson, 1411 E. Nevada St.; and Laurel J. Pope, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin H. Pope, 1311 W. Bent Ave.

The selection of the nominees is under the supervision of Miss Bernice Porterfield, tri-chairman of the Oshkosh High School English....

The University of Texas
News and Information Service, Director W. E. Keys
University Station, Austin, Texas 78712

FOR SUNDAY (AUG. 30)

AUSTIN, Texas (Spl.)--"What if...?"--the question that has teased man's mind from prehistoric times--is now bombarding the digital computer.

Students enrolled in a University of Texas course in high-speed computer programming have challenged the machine to solve all sorts of problems.

Dr. Roger C. Osborn, associate professor of mathematics and coordinator of computer programming courses, recalls some of the more unusual tasks his classes have set for the electronic brain:

--One student's parents owned a feed mill. They wanted to prepare a feed mixture of nine separate ingredients, having certain weight relations and with a chemical content of all essential elements. What combination meeting those requirements would produce the greatest profit?

--An architectural engineer wanted the computer to help him with calculations for building a wall that would withstand the force of a hurricane.

--A card enthusiast enlisted the machine's cunning to devise a way of "beating the house" at blackjack--"a rather ignoble use but a very human...."

Los Angeles City Schools
Public Information Office
John A. Gillean, Supervisor
MAdison 5-8921, Ext. 527

PRINCIPAL ASSIGNMENTS
ANNOUNCED FOR 65 CITY SCHOOLS

Immediate Release

Principal assignments for 65 elementary schools throughout the Los Angeles City School District were announced today by Robert J. Purdy, associate superintendent in charge of the elementary division.

Three of the principals will be serving at schools which will open their doors for the first time when the fall semester starts on Monday, September 14, Purdy said.

The new schools are Harding Street Elementary, 13060 Harding St., Sylmar; Topeka Drive Elementary, 9815 Topeka Dr., Northridge, and Highlander Road Elementary, 23834 Highlander Rd., Canoga Park.

Enrollment is expected to reach a record 365,386 this fall in the district's 435 elementary schools.

New principal assignments are: ....

Los Angeles City Schools
Public Information Office
John A. Gillean, Supervisor
MAdison 5-8921, Ext. 527
8-21-64

SCHOOL BOARD RECEIVES NEW REORGANIZATION PROPOSAL

Immediate Release

A plan for further streamlining of the administrative structure of the Los Angeles City Schools was placed before the City Board of Education last week (Aug. 20).

Superintendent of Schools Jack P. Crowther recommended to the Board that it create two new positions, eliminate two others, establish a new office for research and development, and transfer the supervision of the Special Education Branch to the Office of the Deputy Superintendent for instruction.

Two weeks ago the Board of Education approved a plan which created two new regional elementary school districts, bringing the city's total to eight, and divided the existing one district for secondary schools into four area districts.

The proposal placed before the Board of Education would: ....

Los Angeles City Schools
Public Information Office
John A. Gillean, Supervisor
MAdison 5-8921, Ext. 528
8-21-64

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS SEEK NOON DUTY PLAYGROUND DIRECTORS

Immediate Release

Interested and qualified adults and college students are needed at Los Angeles City elementary schools this fall to work as noontime playground directors, according to Associate Superintendent Robert J. Purdy.

The directors provide noontime supervision of children in school cafeterias, outside eating areas, and on the school playgrounds under the direction of the principal.

College students, parents and other qualified adults are asked by Purdy to apply for these positions at local elementary schools.

Principals will interview applicants from September 1 through September 11 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. All schools....

Los Angeles City Schools
Public Information Office
John A. Gillean, Supervisor
MAdison 5-8921, Ext. 528
8-21-64

REGISTRATION ANNOUNCED FOR KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY GRADES

Immediate Release

A five-day registration period for children who will enter kindergarten or another elementary grade for the first time next month will be held in all 427 Los Angeles elementary schools, according to Associate Superintendent Robert J. Purdy.

The preschool sign-up program will begin on Thursday, September 3, and continue on Friday, September 4, Tuesday, September 8, Thursday September 10 and Friday, September 11.

School starts on Monday, September 14.

"This preregistration period is extremely important for all kindergarten and other elementary grade students entering school for the first time," Purdy stated.

"It permits schools to obtain required registration information from parents, and assures youngsters attending classes on the first day of school and not...."

Fairfax County Public Schools
Fairfax, Virginia
Albert E. Holliday, Coordinator--School-Community Relations
Telephone CR 3-6500, Ext. 259

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release November 4, 1964

Cosmetology Course at W. T. Woodson High School

About 70 girls in Fairfax County Schools spend half of each school day learning anatomy, hairdressing, shop management, salesmanship, haircutting and a variety of other skills as part of a three-year cosmetology course being offered at two Fairfax County high schools.

At W. T. Woodson and Luther Jackson high schools, about 35 girls are enrolled in each school's program. The Luther Jackson course has been conducted since 1961 and has graduated 37 girls to date, while the County's newest program at Woodson was started in 1963 with about 15 girls scheduled to graduate in 1966 in the first three-year cycle.

Woodson's assistant principal for vocational education, Robert Simms, says....

Fairfax County Public Schools
Fairfax, Virginia
Albert E. Holliday, Coordinator--School-Community Relations
Telephone CR 3-6500, Ext. 259

NEWS RELEASE

For Release 1:00 a.m. Thursday, October 22, 1964

By unanimous action of the Fairfax County School Board, E. C. Funderburk has been reappointed for another four year term as division superintendent for Fairfax County Public Schools. Mr. Funderburk will complete his first term as superintendent on July 1, 1965. He came from Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1961 to succeed retiring superintendent W. T. Woodson.

Board Chairman, Dr. William S. Hoofnagle, announcing the appointment today says, "Since Mr. Funderburk assumed his responsibilities in 1961, the effectiveness of our educational program as well as administrative organization have benefited from his direction. Our school population has grown nearly one third in this time...."

Fairfax County Public Schools
Fairfax, Virginia
Albert E. Holliday, Coordinator--School-Community Relations
Telephone CR 3-6500, Ext. 259

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
September 29, 1964

William S. Hoofnagle, chairman of the Fairfax County School Board, has been appointed as an official delegate and will attend the annual meeting of the Virginia School Boards Association which will be held at the Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, Virginia. Also attending will be board member Howard E. Futch and S. Barry Morris, assistant superintendent for finance. The meeting, with its theme, "Virginia Education--1970," will convene at....

Minnesota Education Association
Peter G. Pafiolis
Director of Public Relations
41 Sherburne Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55103
(Telephone: 227-6668)

31 August 1964

release: immediate

ST. PAUL, MINN. - (MEA) - Twin Cities suburbs lead Minnesota school districts in teachers' salaries - topped by Wayzata's $11,918 for a PhD after 15 years of experience.

Three districts - Edina, Osseo, South St. Paul - offer the highest salary for a bachelor-degree teacher with no experience, $5,150. Highest salary for a teacher with a B.A. degree is Bloomington's $9,275.

Edina also offers the highest pay to teachers with masters degrees, $10,506.

And highest pay for a master-degree teacher without experience is the $6,000 paid by Columbia Heights.

These facts highlight the just-published "Minnesota Salary Schedules, 1964-65," annual research study conducted by the Minnesota Education Association (MEA) in which nearly 400 districts participated. These districts employ more than 98 percent of all teachers in the state's graded elementary and secondary schools - or 31,563.

The range of estimated median salaries....

APPENDIX

B

Publications of the National School Public Relations Association

The National School Public Relations Association, organized in 1935 and a department of the National Education Association since 1950, produces handbooks, filmstrip, records, and newsletters for teachers and other school personnel, for parents and other laymen—all designed to promote a better understanding of education in the United States.

Newsletters

Education U.S.A. The Special Weekly Report on Educational Affairs. Annual subscription, $21.

It Starts in the Classroom. The Public Relations Newsletter for Classroom Teachers. Monthly. Annual subscription, $4.

Trends. The School Public Relations Newsletter for members of the National School Public Relations Association. Monthly.

Handbooks for Parents

A Changing Time: Handbook for Parents of Teen-Agers. Published in cooperation with the Association of Classroom Teachers. 1963. 40 pp. 75¢.

The First Big Step. Spells out, in easy language and photographs, what parents can do to get their child ready for school. Published in cooperation with the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the Association of Classroom Teachers. 1966. 36 pp. 60¢.

El Primer Paso Importante. Spanish edition of *The First Big Step* described above. 1967. 36 pp. 60¢.

Happy Journey: Preparing Your Child for School. Published in cooperation with the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the NEA Department of Elementary School Principals. 1953. 32 pp. 75¢.

How To Help Your Child Learn. A Handbook for Parents of Children in Kindergarten Through Grade 6. Published in cooperation with the NEA Department of Elementary School Principals. 1960. 40 pp. 75¢.

Handbooks for School Personnel

The Conference Planner: A Guide to Good Education Meetings. 8½ x 11 inches, plastic covered, wir-o-bound. 72 pp. $12.

Conference Time for Teachers and Parents. Published in cooperation with the Association of Classroom Teachers. 1961. 36 pp. $1.

Feel Their Pulse. A Guide to School Opinion Polling. 1956. 48 pp. $1.

Our Schools Have Kept Us Free. The classic editorial by Henry Steele Commager, in a prestige edition with photographic illustrations. 1963. 24 pp. 25¢.

Public Relations Gold Mine, Volume Nine. A roundup of the latest public relations ideas, 1967, including a communication guide to selected books, reports, articles, and periodicals. 64 pp. $2.

Public Relations Gold Mine. Selected Eight-Volume Set. Containing one copy each of Volumes One, Two, Three, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. 64 pp. each volume. $10.

Public Relations Ideas for Classroom Teachers. Published in cooperation with the Association of Classroom Teachers. 1964. 48 pp. $1.

School Photojournalism: Telling Your School Story in Pictures. By the Editors of LOOK. 1958. 72 pp. $2.

The Shape of Education for 1967-68. Volume 9. Fourteen specially prepared articles by the Editors of *Education U.S.A.* 1967. 64 pp. $2.

Workbook To Win Votes in School Campaigns. Includes suggested layouts and art to clip for reproduction. Published in cooperation with the Ohio Education Association. 1963. 39 pp. $2.

Working with Parents: A Guide for Classroom Teachers and Other Educators. Published in cooperation with the Association of Classroom Teachers. 1968. 40 pp. $1.

Records and Filmstrip

How To Study and Why! By Bernice McCullar. Two LP records for teachers and parents who want to help young people succeed in school. Special school edition produced by G. G. Voith in cooperation with the National School Public Relations Association. Album of two records containing 10 messages. $7.95.

School Birds—Some Feathered Friends We Could Do Without. A public relations filmstrip for everyone on the school staff, showing some of those "rare birds" in the school system whose negative attitudes handicap the school public relations program. Produced in cooperation with the Association of Classroom Teachers. 27 frames, 35mm, full color. Each filmstrip with tape narration and two accompanying scripts. $12.

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